

What Is Claimed Is:

1. An image down-loading apparatus capable of
down-loading an image to a plurality of clients via a
5 network, comprising:

first output means for outputting an image;

second output means for outputting information
which is independent of the image outputted by said
first output means;

10 a switch for switching between said first output
means and said second output means; and

a switch controller for controlling said switch,
wherein said switch controller controls said switch
so as to select said second output means for a first
15 predetermined period after said first output means is
selected for a second predetermined period.

2. The image down-loading apparatus according to
claim 1, wherein, when a request for down-loading of the
20 image to be outputted by said first output means is
received while said second output means is selected
after a third predetermined period has elapsed since
said switch switched from said first output means to
said second output means, said switch controller
25 controls said switch so as to switch from said second
output means to said first output means.

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3. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the image down-loading
5 apparatus further comprises discrimination means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch so as to make the first predetermined period shorter for a client which belongs to a first group than for a
10 client which belongs to a second group.

4. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising memory for storing information on clients,

15 wherein said discrimination means discriminates a client as belonging to the first group when the information on the client is stored in said memory, and discriminates a client as belonging to the second group when the information on the client is not stored in said
20 memory.

5. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said discrimination means discriminates a client as belonging to the first group when the client
25 enters a correct password, and discriminates a client as belonging to the second group otherwise.

6. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the image down-loading
5 apparatus further comprises discrimination means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch so as to keep selecting said first output means for a client which belongs to a first group.
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7. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising memory for storing information on clients,

wherein said discrimination means discriminates a
15 client as belonging to the first group when the information on the client is stored in said memory, and discriminates a client as belonging to a second group when the information on the client is not stored in said memory.
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8. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said discrimination means discriminates a client as belonging to the first group when the client enters a correct password, and discriminates a client as
25 belonging to the second group otherwise.

9. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the image down-loading apparatus further comprises discrimination means for
5 discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch so as to keep selecting said first output means for a client which belongs to a first group, and to make the first predetermined period shorter for a client which
10 belongs to a second group than for a client which belongs to a third group.

10. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the image outputted by said first
15 output means is a moving image.

11. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the image outputted by said first output means is an image being sensed by a video camera.
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12. The image down-loading apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising memory for storing information,

wherein the information to be outputted by said
25 second output means is the information stored in said memory.

13. An image down-loading system capable of down-loading an image to a plurality of clients via a network, comprising:

5 first down-loading means for down-loading an image;
second down-loading means for down-loading information which is independent of the image down-loaded by said first down-loading means;

a switch for switching between said first down-
10 loading means and said second down-loading means; and
a switch controller for controlling said switch, wherein said switch controller controls said switch so as to select said second down-loading means for a first predetermined period after said first down-loading
15 means is selected for a second predetermined period.

14. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein the clients have memory for storing the information down-loaded by said second down-loading
20 means, and while said switch selects said second down-loading means, the clients display the information stored in said memory.

15. The image down-loading system according to
25 claim 13, wherein the clients have memory for storing the information down-loaded by said second down-loading

means, and since a communication path is established on the network until the image to be down-loaded by said first down-loading means start down-loaded, the clients display the information stored in said memory.

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16. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein the clients have memory for storing the information down-loaded by said second down-loading means, and after a communication path on the network is disconnected, the clients display the information stored in said memory.

17. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein, when a request for down-loading of the image to be down-loaded by said first down-loading means is received while said second down-loading means is selected after a third predetermined period has elapsed since said switch switched from said first down-loading means to said second down-loading means, said switch controller controls said switch so as to switch from said second down-loading means to said first down-loading means.

18. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the image down-loading system

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further comprises discrimination means for
discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch
so as to make the first predetermined period shorter for
5 a client which belongs to a first group than for a
client which belongs to a second group.

19. The image down-loading system according to
claim 18, further comprising memory for storing
10 information on clients,

wherein said discrimination means discriminates a
client as belonging to the first group when the
information on the client is stored in said memory, and
discriminates a client as belonging to the second group
15 when the information on the client is not stored in said
memory.

20. The image down-loading system according to
claim 18, wherein said discrimination means
20 discriminates a client as belonging to the first group
when the client enters a correct password, and
discriminates a client as belonging to the second group
otherwise.

21. The image down-loading system according to
claim 13, wherein the clients are classified into a

plurality of groups, and the image down-loading system further comprises discrimination means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch
5 so as to keep selecting said first down-loading means for a client which belongs to a first group.

22. The image down-loading system according to claim 21, further comprising memory for storing
10 information on clients,

wherein said discrimination means discriminates a client as belonging to the first group when the information on the client is stored in said memory, and discriminates a client as belonging to a second group
15 when the information on the client is not stored in said memory.

23. The image down-loading system according to claim 21, wherein said discrimination means
20 discriminates a client as belonging to the first group when the client enters a correct password, and discriminates a client as belonging to the second group otherwise.

24. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein the clients are classified into a

plurality of groups, and the image down-loading system further comprises discrimination means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said switch controller control said switch
5 so as to keep selecting said first down-loading means for a client which belongs to a first group, and to make the first predetermined period shorter for a client which belongs to a second group than for a client which belongs to a third group.

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25. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, wherein the image down-loaded by said first down-loading means is a moving image.

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26. The image down-loading system according to claim 25, wherein the image down-loaded by said first down-loading means is an image being sensed by a video camera.

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27. The image down-loading system according to claim 13, further comprising memory for storing information,

wherein the information to be down-loaded by said second down-loading means is the information stored in
25 said memory.

28. An image down-loading method capable of down-loading an image to a plurality of clients via a network, comprising:

- a first down-loading step of down-loading an image;
- 5 a second down-loading step of down-loading information which is independent of the image down-loaded in said first down-loading step;

- a first switching step of switching from said first down-loading step to said second down-loading step after
- 10 a first predetermined period has elapsed; and

- a second switching step of switching from said second down-loading step to said first down-loading step after a second predetermined period has elapsed.

- 15 29. The image down-loading method according to claim 28, further comprising:

- a step of causing a client to store said information down-loaded in said second down-loading step; and

- 20 a step of causing the client to display the stored information for a period corresponding to said second down-loading step.

- 25 30. The image down-loading method according to claim 28, further comprising:

a step of causing a client to store the information
down-loaded in said second down-loading step; and

a step of displaying the stored information for a
period since a communication path is established on the
5 network until the image to be down-loaded in said first
down-loading step starts down-loaded.

31. The image down-loading method according to
claim 28, further comprising:

10 a step of causing a client to store the information
down-loaded in said second down-loading step; and

a step of displaying the stored information after a
communication path on the network is disconnected.

15 32. The image down-loading method according to
claim 28, further comprising:

a determination step of determining whether or not
a request for down-loading of the image to be down-
loaded in said first down-loading step is received
20 during said second down-loading step after a third
predetermined period has elapsed since said first
switching step; and

a third switching step of switching from said
second down-loading step to said first down-loading step
25 when it is determined that the request is received.

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33. The image down-loading method according to claim 28, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the method further comprises a discrimination step of discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein the second predetermined period is shorter for a client which belongs to a first group than for a client which belongs to a second group.

34. The image down-loading method according to claim 33, wherein, in said discrimination step, whether or not a client is a registered client, and the registered client is discriminated to belong to the first group and a non-registered client is discriminated to belong to the second group.

35. The image down-loading method according to claim 33, wherein, in said discrimination step, a client entered a correct password is discriminated to belong to the first group, and other clients are discriminated to belong to the second group.

36. The image down-loading method according to claim 28, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the method further comprises a

discrimination step of discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said first switching step is disabled for a client which belongs to a first group.

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37. The image down-loading method according to claim 36, wherein, in said discrimination step, whether or not a client is a registered client, and the registered client is discriminated to belong to the first group and a non-registered client is discriminated to belong to the second group.

38. The image down-loading method according to claim 36, wherein, in said discrimination step, a client entered a correct password is discriminated to belong to the first group, and other clients are discriminated to belong to the second group.

39. The image down-loading method according to claim 28, wherein the clients are classified into a plurality of groups, and the method further comprises a discrimination step of discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said first switching step is disabled for a client which belongs to a first group, and the second predetermined period is shorter for a client which

belongs to a second group than for a client which
belongs to a third group.

40. The image down-loading method according to
5 claim 28, wherein the image down-loaded in said first
down-loading step is a moving image.

41. The image down-loading method according to
claim 40, wherein the image down-loaded in said first
10 down-loading step is an image being sensed by a video
camera.

42. The image down-loading method according to
claim 28, wherein, in said second down-loading step,
15 information stored in memory in advance is down-loaded.

43. A computer program product comprising a
computer usable medium having computer readable program
code means embodied in said medium for down-loading an
20 image to a plurality of clients via a network, said
product including:

first computer readable program code means for
down-loading an image;

second computer readable program code means for
25 down-loading information which is independent of the
image;

third computer readable program code means for
switching from said first computer readable program code
means to said second computer readable program code
means after a first predetermined period has elapsed;

5 and

fourth computer readable program code means for
switching from said computer readable program code means
to said first computer readable program code means after
a second predetermined period has elapsed.

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44. The computer program product according to
claim 43, further comprising:

fifth computer readable program code means for
causing a client to store the information; and

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sixth computer readable program code means for
causing the client to display the stored information for
a period corresponding said second computer readable
program code means is to be activated.

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45. The computer program product according to
claim 43, further comprising:

seventh computer readable program code means for
causing a client to store the information; and

25 eighth computer readable program code means for
displaying the stored information for a period since a

communication path is established on the network until the image starts down-loaded.

46. The computer program product according to
5 claim 43, further comprising:

ninth computer readable program code means for causing a client to store the information; and

tenth computer readable program code means for displaying the stored information after a communication
10 path on the network is disconnected.

47. The computer program product according to claim 43, further comprising:

eleven computer readable program code means for
15 determining whether or not a request for down-loading of the image is received during said second computer readable program code means is active after a third predetermined period has elapsed since said third computer readable program code means is activated; and

20 twelve computer readable program code means for switching from said second computer readable program code means to said first computer readable program code means when it is determined that the request is received.

25 48. The computer program product according to claim 43, wherein the clients are classified into a

plurality of groups, and the product further comprises thirteen computer readable program code means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein the second predetermined period is shorter
5 for a client which belongs to a first group than for a client which belongs to a second group.

49. The computer program product according to claim 43, wherein the clients are classified into a
10 plurality of groups, and the product further comprises fourteen computer readable program code means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said first computer readable program code means is disabled for a client which belongs to a first
15 group.

50. The computer program product according to claim 43, wherein the clients are classified into a
20 plurality of groups, and the product further comprises fifteen computer readable program code means for discriminating a group to which a client belongs,

wherein said first computer readable program code means is disabled for a client which belongs to a first group, and the second predetermined period is shorter
25 for a client which belongs to a second group than for a client which belongs to a third group.